

ELLA FITZGERALD: THE RODGERS AND HART SONGBOOK, VOL. 2

ELLA FITZGERALD THE RODGERS AND HART SONGBOOK VOLUME

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- 1. GIVE IT BACK TO THE INDIANS
- 2. TEN CENTS A DANCE
- 3. THERE'S A SMALL HOTEL
 - 4. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TIME IT WAS
- 5. I COULD WRITE A BOOK
- 6. MY FUNNY VALENTINE
- 7. BEWITCHED
- 8. MY ROMANCE
- 9. WAIT TILL YOU SEE HER
- 10. LOVER
- 11. ISN'T IT ROMANTIC
- 12. BLUE MOON
- 13. MOUNTAIN GREENERY
- 14. HERE IN MY ARMS
- 15. EVERYTHING I'VE GOT
- 16. THOU SWELL
- 17. MY HEART STOOD STILL

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 56:15

17 more Rodgers and Hart songs are available on Ella Fitzgerald: The Rodgers and Hart Songbook, Vol. 1 (Verve Compact Disc 821 579-2).

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LLA FITZGERALD

1. GIVE IT BACK TO THE INDIANS (Chappell Music)

2. TEN CENTS A DANCE

(Warner Bros. Music)

2:47 3. THERE'S A SMALL HOTEL

(Chappell Music)

4. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TIME IT WAS 3:46 (Chappell Music)

5. I COULD WRITE A BOOK 3:37 (Chappell Music)

6. MY FUNNY VALENTINE 3:53 (Chappell Music)

7:01 7. BEWITCHED

(Chappell Music) 3:42 8. MY ROMANCE (T.B. Harms Inc.)

9. WAIT TILL YOU SEE HER 1:28

(Chappell Music) 10. LOVER 3:16

(Famous Music Corp.) 11. ISN'T IT ROMANTIC 3:00 (Famous Music Corp.)

12. BLUE MOON 3:10 (Robbins Music Corp.)

13. MOUNTAIN GREENERY 2:14 (Warner Bros. Inc.)

14. HERE IN MY ARMS (Warner Bros. Inc.)

3:21 15. EVERYTHING I'VE GOT (Chappell Music)

16. THOU SWELL 2:03 (Warner Bros. Inc.)

17. MY HEART STOOD STILL 3:03 (Warner Bros. Inc.)

All songs by Richard Rodgers (music) and Lorenz Hart (lyrics). All songs ASCAP.

THE RODGERS AND HART SONGBOOK VOLUME 2

Ella Fitzgerald, vocals. Orchestra arranged and conducted by Buddy Bregman. Recorded August 27-31, 1956 at Capitol Studios in Los Angeles. Note: Selections 1-12 are stereo, 13-17 are mono (these tracks were never issued in stereo and stereo masters do not exist). Original sessions produced by Norman Granz. Produced for Compact Disc by Richard Seidel Original sessions engineered by Val Valentin. Digitally remastered by Dennis Drake. Polygram Studios USA. All selections previously released.

The following liner notes are reprinted in their entirety from the 1977 LP reissue of this material (VE2-2519). Some of the songs referred to in the text are included in Ella Fitzgerald: The Rodgers and Hart Songbook, Vol. 1 (821 579-2).

"As Rodgers and Hart see it," Time magazine reported in 1938, "what was killing musicomedy was its sameness, its tameness, its eternal rhyming of June with moon. They decided it was not enough to be just good at the job; they have to be constantly different also. The one possible formula is: Don't have a formula!" By 1938, Richard Rodgers had

been writing melodies to Lorenz (Larry) Hart's words for about twenty years - since the composer was 17 and the lyricist 23 - and a quick look at some of their several hundred songs shows that Time had described their lifelong credo. Rodgers, like his contemporary George Gershwin, enjoyed devising standard length, 32-bar refrains so that each one sounded completely distinctive; Hart, as Rodgers wrote in the Theatre Arts Monthly, was

always "violent on the subject of rhyming in songs, feeling that the public was capable of understanding better things than the current monosyllabic juxtaposition of 'slush' and 'mush?"

The combination of these two temperaments produced striking results; as the musical theater historian Stanley Green has put it, the Rodgers and Hart collaboration "was a near-perfect combination of frequently sharp, sophisticated lyrics set to music that was just as frequently warm and lyrical." And he adds, "The remarkable thing, of course, is how well each man complemented the other's style, adding something both inseparable from, and indispensable to, the

total effect."
Rodgers and Hart's affinity extended beyond the welding of musical and lyrical styles to a concern both with the subject matter of the songs and the variety and integrity of the theatrical contexts for which their songs were written. Rodgers notes that he and Hart were willing and eager to write about subjects "hitherto ignored by the songwriting profession. This

desire to explore did not stop with individual songs. It extended to the shows themselves... There was an almost continual search for diversification." Thus the shows they wrote ranged from "... a little revue through romantic fantasy, and a musical circus to political satire."

Diversity was only one goal. Like the Gershwin brothers, Rodgers and Hart strove for close integration of music, lyrics and libretto. As Oscar Hammerstein. Rodgers' "other" lyricist, observed, "Rodgers is essentially a composer for plays. He writes music to depict story and character and is, therefore, himself a dramatist . . . He composes in order to make words fly higher or cut deeper than they would without the aid of his music." Hart's lyrics, usually written after Rodgers' music, followed suit. After creating the songs, Rodgers and Hart actively participated in casting and rehearsing their shows, and constantly sought performers who would do right by their material

and the dramatic situation at hand.
A noteworthy and perhaps
paradoxical feature of good

musical theater songs is that they often take on lives of their own. long outlasting their original shows. A Rodgers song succeeds as an independent entity, wrote Winthrop Sargent in the New Yorker, because "its succinctness and catchiness guarantees its accessibility to people unaware of its dramatic connotations . . . It is that momentary crystallization of mood and emotions that counts." Knowing the situation in which a Rodgers and Hart song was introduced can be enlightening. but is rarely essential to its appreciation. "Thou Swell," for instance, bounces merrily along, with archaic pronouns wedded to modern slang adjectives, amusing even those who are unaware that the song is the hit from the musical version of A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1927). On the other hand, sometimes context is entirely irrelevant, as with "Blue Moon," one of Rodgers and Hart's few popular non-theatrical tunes.

When songs from the musical theater are taken outside the theater, each performer can choose whether to imitate the original version or to evolve a more

personal one. To this day, Rodgers refuses to identify the definitive interpretations of his songs; he simply hopes that singers of those songs, no matter what their idiosyncracies, will project "intimacy, naturalness and realism." This standard is met by performers as dissimilar as Judy Garland and Ella Fitzgerald. Judy, the incomparable singing actress, a lady of the stage, sang roles in the original shows and then revived the characters on record and in concert; Ella, the consummate jazz artist, whose velvety voice projects grace, detachment, subtlety, sang with jazz bands but did little acting, and thus brought a new vision and flavor to classic "show

tunes."
Richard Rodgers commented,
"Time and again, I am asked if I
object to having my music distorted
by singers and bands. 'Distorted'
is the key word here and I do object
most strongly to having my music
distorted. However, I welcome
having these songs 'treated' if the
treatment is in good taste and does
not present the songs with bad
musical grammar. Everything Ella
Fitzgerald does is happily within

the borders of good taste. She portrays the songs — she does not betray them. She does not detract — she adds."

This collection presents Ella "treating" 34 songs from 20 shows and films spanning Rodgers and Hart's first and last Broadway successes (1925-43). The interpretive possibilities of these songs, and the manner in which Ella meets their assorted challenges demonstrates that for these creators and this performer, the best formula was indeed no formula. The earliest song on the album is

"Manhattan" (1925), Rodgers and

Hart's first smash hit. "Strangely enough," Hart wrote when the song was introduced in The Garrick Gaieties, "it is a number with very intricate and elaborate rhymes, though the song hit of a show is usually very simple, with monosyllabic words. 'Manhattan' gets several encores at every performance, is the laughing hit of the show, and is also the music strain that people carry away with them." The tricky lyric is set to what Rodgers calls an "easygoing, strolling melody" that forms "a swinging, lighthearted ode to all

the joys of living in New York." The song was staged as a boy-girl duet, and was intended as a tribute not only to the "wondrous toy" of a city, but to youthful enthusiasm and mutual affection as well.

"Manhattan," and many other tunes on this album, became instrumental jazz classics soon after they were written (clearly, Rodgers' use of repeated notes and his regular phrase structures readily lend themselves to improvisatory treatment). Ella, in the tradition of the great jazz instrumentalists, takes the "Manhattan" strain more slowly than the original staging, singing it from a more seasoned perspective. However, lest she - or the songwriters - be stereotyped, both do an about face in "Mountain Greenery" (1926), in which they

extol the virtues of country living.
As a kind of postscript to these early New York vignettes, Rodgers and Hart wrote a song about the city in 1939 called "Give it Back to the Indians." This, much more than "Mountain Greenery," pointed to the problems of modern urban life. Rodgers says with some reason that the lines "We've tried to run

the City/But the City ran away;" are probably the earliest sung admission of New York's ungovernability.

ungovernability.

Besides the New York link, these three tunes generate a degree of optimism and exuberance which Hammerstein described as pervading all Rodgers and Hart's work — whose essence was youthfulness: "They stayed young and adventurous and never lost an attractive impudence that was very much their own." (These qualities can be seen in other songs on the album, from the racing "I've Got Five Dollars" to the slightly more godge "Plue Room" and "There's

sedate "Blue Room" and "There's a Small Hotel?") However, there is another wistful and more melancholy thread which appears early on in Rodgers and Hart, and reappears frequently in one form or another. Probably the best example on this album is "Ten Cents a Dance," of which both men were proud. According to Rodgers, it may have been the first show song to express the feelings of a person trapped in the underworld. As Lehman Engel, the conductor and writer, described it, "This is a bitter song. Its hard expressions

of an unbearable lifestyle
nevertheless are never self-pitying."
This kind of song is best sung
straight, with the kind of easy grace
and poise that have always been
synonymous with Ella Fitzgerald.
Her diction is perfect; the words
resonate with clarity and with
poignancy. The tempo indication
is "slow/rubato" but one senses that
Ella did not quite let herself go
rhythmically as much as she might
have liked, perhaps because of
the four-square, uninspired
accompaniment.

There are two songs in this set from *Pal Joey*, which was based on a series of stories John O'Hara wrote about a master of ceremonies in chintzy nightclubs; it was the first major American musical treating an anti-hero. This is especially relevant when appraising a song like "I Could Write a Book." Ostensibly, and out of context, it is a tender, straightforward love song. In

context, the song is ironic: Rodgers

knew O'Hara's character, far from

unlikely ever to have even read one

- but wished to impress a lady with

his creative capacity. Ella sings it

being able to write a book, was

sweetly and effectively, with no reference to the original character; that it works so well shows how some of the best theater songs function in several ways. It speaks to a comment Shaw made about Shakespeare, to the effect that the better Shakespeare portrayed the specifics of his time, the more timeless his work became.

The other *Pal Joey* song, one of Rodgers and Hart's most enduring treasures, "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered," is Ella's piece de resistance. Again, the songwriters used one of their favorite methods a synthesis of opposites, or in Rodgers' words, "the contrast of flowing sentimental melody with words that are unsentimental and self-mocking." Ella does justice to both the thesis and the antithesis. drawing on her consummate skills as a jazz singer to give the perfomance a special and individual stamp. She sounds disturbed, puzzled, almost spellbound; the voice is husky, the words seem to tremble. She hesitates before landing on key notes, arriving a fraction of a second off the beat, achieving a slightly syncopated effect. The

rhythm is relaxed rhythm, and is enhanced by the appropriately subdued piano accompaniment. The effect can be bewitching.

And bewilderment is perhaps the most characteristic emotion of a Rodgers and Hart song. Loneliness puzzles them, as in four searing songs on the album: "Little Girl Blue" (1935) ("Sit there and count your fingers/What can you do?"). "Ship Without a Sail" (1929) ("When there's no love to hold my love/Why is my heart so frail?"). "Spring Is Here" (1938) ("Spring is here/Why doesn't my heart go dancing?") and "It Never Entered My Mind;" (1940) in which it never occurred to the protagonist "That I'd awaken with the sun/And order orange juice for one," and which Ella puts across with the bare lost quality required; here, too overdramatized singing would diminish the effect.

diminish the effect.
For Rodgers and Hart, loneliness may have been puzzling — but so was love. In two of their best-known songs, "I Didn't Know What Time It Was" (1939) and "Where or When" (1937), the singer feels totally lost — not unhappy, just overcome. Did any lyricist but

Hart so commonly use the deja-vu phenomenon? Rodgers reports that they got letters from psychology professors telling the songwriters that "Where or When" was useful to them in their lectures. The lyric speaks directly of a feeling of wonder and fright; singing and hearing it represented provides relief. In that spirit Ella sings "Where or When" slowly and in strict meter, as if to say, "everything seems to be in place — but it isn't quite."

Another popular song in this vein, "My Heart Stood Still" (1927) has an interesting history. As Rodgers tells it, he and Hart were in Paris, taking two friends home in a taxi, when another cab almost smashed into their own. Out of danger, one of the women gasped, "Oh, my heart stood still?" Hart commented that this would make a great song title, so Rodgers obligingly wrote it down. Later, in London, he composed a melody for it, and informed Hart that he'd set the title to music. Hart asked, "What title?" Rodgers told him, and the lyricist responded, "Say that's a great title. Where did you get it?"

Another, so to speak, "incredulous" but more upbeat number is "This Can't Be Love" ("This can't be love because I feel so well/No sobs, no sorrows. no sighs"). Besides a satirical presentation of befuddlement, this lyric illustrates Hart's ambivalent and ingenious treatment of loverelated themes. Shunning direct statements of "I love you," Hart tackled the issue from a number of unpredictable angles. "Here in My Arms," for instance, is, according to Engel, a most original way for a love song to deal with unrequited love, to wit, "Here in my arms it's adorable/It's deplorable/That you

were never here."

"Here in My Arms" was first sung as a duet in Dearest Enemy (1925). Rodgers has noted that the repetition of the song at three points in the action, when different moods and therefore different interpretations were required, taught him a lot about the varied meanings a single song can project; context and performer matter a great deal. As a show song, "Here In" was used ad seriatim for flirting, pining away, and reuniting. Ella sings it covly, and rhythmically

lets herself go against a lightly a Song in My Heart" (1929) in improvised piano and bass which the relationship between background. lovers is portrayed as a song. In Just as Rodgers and Hart "Dancing on the Ceiling" (1930), enjoyed the juxtaposition of "The world is lyrical/Because a contrasting music and lyrics, so miracle/Has brought my lover to Hart delighted in the incongruities me." Also, the singer imagines her of word play. Contradictions lover "dancing" above her. The abound in two of the most genesis of this image is again a humorous songs on the album. fascinating one. When Hart heard "Everything I've Got" (1942) and Rodgers' tune, he got the feeling "I Wish I Were in Love Again." of weightlessness and elevation. A performer like Judy Garland, This sensation led to a girl's who sang "Love Again" in the film terpsichorean fantasy in song. Babes in Arms, in particularly Rodgers points out that on the adept at projecting what is an words "He dances overhead" essentially dramatic quality; what the melody goes up in a stairway is important here is talking in song motion, and takes a big leap when so that listeners understand the the fellow reaches the ceiling. frenzy, sarcasm and longing. On "Lover" (1932) has another the other hand, in "You Took musical turn of phrase: "Lover, Advantage of Me" (1928), which when we're dancing, keep on involves bemused and pouting glancing in my eyes/Till love's own capitulation to a lover, Ella's entrancing music dies." Again, smooth presentation of the clever there are opposing interpretations lyric (to a slightly loosened up that work in diverse ways. In the meter and melody) works film Love Me Tonight, Jeanette beautifully. MacDonald sang the song as a Another of Rodgers and Hart's joke. As a princess hoping for her favorite approaches to love was to dream man to materialize, she sang make affairs of the heart analogous astride a horse, as follows: "Lover, to musical or aesthetic experiences. when you find me/Will you blind The classic example of this is "With me with your glow?/Make me cast

related to the Gershwins' "Funny Rodgers and Hart't most sustained and vivid paean to the Face" and Kern/Hammerstein's "Bill." interweavings of music and love is Given the value Rodgers and "Isn't It Romantic" (1932): "Isn't it romantic? Music in the night: Hart placed on originality and individuality, their work would be A dream that can be heard . . . ; Isn't it romantic? Every note that's incomplete without a song that sung is like a lover's kiss." Again, directly attacked the use of clichés. The Gershwins, Yip Harburg and Jeanette MacDonald as a frivolous Harold Arlen addressed themselves princess introduced the songs, her high operatic soprano sounding to this task in songs like "Blah Blah Blah" (1930) and "What Can You strangely incongruous against Say in a Love Song? (That Hasn't the tinny film orchestra, making the song seem slight and Been Said Before)" (1934). inconsequential. Ella takes the Ironically, and most appropriately, this album ends with Rodgers and emotional potential of the lyric Hart's most famous collection of much further, slowing the tempo clichés, "My Romance" (1935): and letting each new thought "My romance doesn't have to have breathe before the next one a moon in the sky/My romance begins. doesn't need a blue lagoon standing Despite Ella's interpretive depth, "Isn't It Romantic" is by...My romance doesn't need a thing but you?' Ella's interpretation fundamentally an idealized is understated and free-flowing; it treatment of love. In Rodgers' leaves the listener with the feeling opinion, Hart's lyrics gained that there is little more to say.

Keep My Love Alive" is one of his

trickiest), this maturity is evident

in such classics as "Have You Met

Miss Jones" (1937) and "My Funny

Valentine" (1937), which is closely

Deena Rosenberg

behind me all my – WHOA!" This

worked in the film, but not outside

frequently heard as a dance band

maturity with time. Though Hart

neve stopped inventing witty word

combinations (a late song, "To

it. The number in waltz-time is

instrumental.



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during mastering (transcription).

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DD Utilisation d'un magnétophone analogique pendant les séances d'enregistrement, utilisation d'un magnétophone numérique pendant le mixage et/ou le montage et la gravure.

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